

First Aid

for parents

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If you're a parent, guardian or carer, it's important to know what action to take in the event of a medical emergency. First aid is an important life skill and understanding the essential knowledge will help to provide you with the confidence needed to save a life.

We've consulted parents and bloggers, including **Toddle About** and **Honest Mum**, to ensure this guide covers the most common and important first aid emergencies that can occur to children and infants.

In all situations, it's important to:

Remain calm.

Children can pick up on emotions; if they see someone else scared, they may start to panic themselves.

Provide a little bit of TLC.

This can go a long way in helping a child feel safe and looked after.

DRAB

One of the best ways to remember essential first aid is to follow the easy-to-remember acronym: **DRAB**.

Danger - Assess the situation to decide whether it's safe to approach

Response - Try talking to them in both ears, do you get a response?

Airway - Check the airway

Breathing - Look, listen and feel for any signs of breath

By remembering **DRAB**, and the core methods behind the acronym, you will be able to stay calm and remain focused in any emergency situation.



Infant and child CPR

As children's bones are more flexible and their airways are narrower, performing CPR on an **infant or child** is **different** to how you would **treat an adult**.

There are many reasons why you might need to perform CPR on a child, **including:**

- **Choking**
- **Drowning**
- **Head trauma**
- **Suffocation**

If someone is with you, get them to **call 999** whilst you perform CPR.

If you're on your own, **call the emergency services** and **activate the speakerphone** function to speak to the operator while delivering first aid.

Gently **tap on the shoulder** of the child and see if you can get a response. If no response is given, position the child on their back and perform CPR - providing **rescue breaths and compressions**.

Rescue breaths for a baby under one year

- **Ensure the head** is in a neutral position and then lift the chin.
- **Take a breath**, cover the baby's mouth and nose with your mouth. If you can't cover both, cover the mouth.
- **Blow a breath** into the baby's mouth and nose for over one second, making the chest rise.
- **With the head tilted**, take your mouth away and watch for the chest to go down.
- **Take another breath** and repeat four more times.

Rescue breaths for a child over one year

- **Ensure the head** is in a neutral position and then lift the chin.
- **Close the soft part** of the nose using the index finger and thumb.
- **Open the mouth**, whilst keeping the chin pointing upwards.
- **Take a breath**, placing your lips around their mouth.
- **Blow a breath** into the mouth for over one second, making the chest rise.
- **With the head tilted**, take your mouth away and watch for the chest to go down.
- **Take another breath** and repeat four more times.
- **Check whether breathing** resumes normally.



How to perform a compression:

- **Place the heel** of one hand on the breastbone, in the centre of the chest.
- **Lean over** with your arm straight and press down vertically on the breastbone.
- **Press down** on the child's chest by 1/3 to 1/2 the depth of the chest.
- **Release the pressure** without removing your hand.
- **Repeat this process** 30 times, each time letting the chest rise completely.

Cuts and bruises

Bumps and bruises come with the territory of being a child. In minor cases, when there's little pain or blood, there won't be any need for medical assistance. A **plaster and some TLC** will be the perfect antidote.

To treat minor cuts and scrapes:

- **Wash the injured** area with cool water
- **Wash around the cut** with soap, avoiding getting any soap into the wound
- **Cover the wound** with a sterile pad, bandage or plaster
- **Use a cold compress** wrapped in a towel to help reduce the pain



If the cut is numb, cannot be closed or will not stop bleeding, you will need to **seek medical attention**.

To treat bruises:

- **Apply a cold** compress as soon as possible
- **Reapply the cold** compress, if needed, every 10-15 minutes

If the bruise swells, and doesn't fade away within a week, it will **need medical attention**.



Tip: Ice is one of the **best treatments** for bruises as it stops blood flow to the injury, limiting the size of the bruise.

How to treat a high temperature

A high temperature or fever can be very distressing for infants and is usually caused by a **minor infection**, such as an earache, sore throat or cold.

In **most cases**, a high temperature can be **treated at home** with care and attention.

How to tell if your child has a fever:

- Sweaty or clammy skin
- Flushed cheeks
- Their forehead, back or stomach feels hotter than usual

How high is too high? The best way to identify if your infant has a high temperature is to use a thermometer. In children under the age of five, **a temperature higher than 37.5C (99.5F)** would be considered a fever.

How to look after a fever:

- **Ensure they stay** hydrated. Encourage them to drink plenty of water
- **Remove excess** clothing
- **Keep the room** well aired and at a comfortable temperature
- **Check on your child** regularly throughout the night
- **If your infant** is in further distress and over the age of three months old, consider giving them the recommended dose of liquid paracetamol



Tip: It is **not advised** to give your infant a sponge bath in **cool water** as this could lower the child's body temperature too quickly.

In this instance, it is **extremely important** to monitor your infant's health. A fever could be a sign of something much more serious, such as **meningitis**.



Meningitis

Children **under five** are at most risk from meningitis as their immune system isn't yet fully developed. This prevents them from being able to easily fight off infection.

Early symptoms can include a **fever, headache** and **cold hands and feet**. It's important to be aware of the symptoms of meningitis as it can strike quickly.

Bacterial meningitis

Bacterial meningitis is caused by **bacteria** and is treated as a **serious medical emergency**. It is most common in children under the **age of five**, particularly babies **under the age of one**.

Viral meningitis

Viral meningitis is caused by **viruses spread through sneezing, coughing and poor hygiene**. It is the most common form of meningitis, however, it is also **less serious**.

How to tell if your child has meningitis:

- Has a fever
- Vomiting
- Refusing food
- Becomes drowsy
- Rapid breathing
- Have pale, blotchy skin and a red rash
- Have a tense, bulging soft spot on their head (fontanelle)

The **glass test** is one of the easiest ways to identify if your infant has meningitis. **Press** the side of a **clear glass** firmly **against the rash**; spots or blotches may fade at first but keep checking. Any spots or rashes that **fail to fade** under pressure will **require medical advice**.





I find it interesting that although we all love our children deeply and fret about what we should do when our bundles of joy get poorly, very few parents ever attend formal first aid training that teaches them how to handle the most common, and potentially life threatening, illnesses and accidents that can strike their little ones.



Tim Freed, Toddle About (www.toddleabout.co.uk)

Poisoning

Most cases of poisoning happen **in the home**, with children **under the age of five** most at risk of being accidentally poisoned.

Types of poison:

- Household items
- Cosmetic items
- Bleach
- Pesticides
- Carbon monoxide
- Recreational drugs or substances

The symptoms of poisoning can vary based on the type of poison and how much has been consumed, but the

general symptoms are:

- Vomiting
- Stomach pains
- Drowsiness and fainting
- Confusion

If you think your child has been poisoned, it's important to:

- **Stay calm** and act quickly
- **Call 999** immediately
- **Make sure** the item is taken away
- **Do not** make your child vomit, as this can cause more damage
- **Give your child** plenty of water



Tip: It's important to **lock poisonous products away** once you have finished using them and to keep them out of a reachable place.

Asthma

Asthma is caused when the **tubes bringing air in and out** of the lungs are **irritated and swollen**. This will have an impact on the ability to breathe and can be very uncomfortable.

Asthma can be triggered by **seasonal** and **weather conditions, dust, cold air** and **exercise**.

The most common symptoms of asthma in infants are:

- Coughing
- Wheezing
- Difficulty in breathing
- Complaints of a tight feeling in the chest

If you think your infant might have asthma, it's important to **book a medical appointment** so the condition can be properly diagnosed with correct medication such as inhalers.



Signs of an asthma emergency in children under the age of five:

- Gasping for air
- Breathing in hard, resulting in the abdomen being sucked under the ribs
- Restricted breathing, causing trouble speaking

If you think your infant might be suffering from an asthma attack:

- Remain calm
- Use the prescribed medication
- If the inhaler doesn't provide relief, call 999



Tip: To keep asthma attacks at bay, make sure your **house is clean** and **free from dust** as dust mites can severely affect asthma. Be careful which **cleaning products** and sprays you use as these **can also have a negative effect** on asthma symptoms.





I've recently booked a First Aid Course for my husband and I. I wish I had opted for one pre-kids or sooner to be honest as there have been many times I felt one would have helped me, particularly when I slipped holding Alexander on a wet floor when he was a baby. He was fine but I had concussion and it was a hugely stressful time as you can imagine. Having peace of mind and knowing how to help your family, yourself and of course others, is vital so I'd urge others to consider a course too.

Vicki Psarias, Honest Mum (www.honestmum.com)



Burns

Children have **skin more sensitive** than adults so it's important to know how to treat a burn quickly and efficiently.

According to Fire Kills, in England alone, **over 400 children** under the age of **11 are injured** each year due to accidental fires in the home.

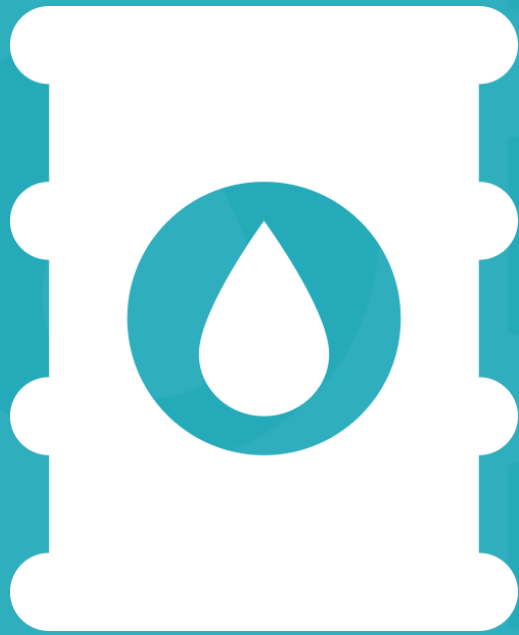
Burns can be caused by **hot beverages, electrical faults, steam** or **hot objects**.

How to prevent burns:

- **Keep matches**, lighters and lit candles out of reach.
- **Put child-safety covers** on all electrical outlets.
- **Get rid of old** or damaged equipment that has old or frayed cords.

If your child experiences a burn or scald, think **cool, cover** and **call**.





Cool: **Cool the affected area** under cold running water for at least ten minutes. Never use ice.

Cover: **Cover with something clean**, such as cling film.

Call: If further medical treatment is required, **call 999**.

It's important to **stop the burning process as soon as possible** and to remove any clothing or jewellery near the burnt area of the skin. **Don't try** to remove something which is stuck to the skin, as this could cause further injury.

All chemical and electrical burns will require **immediate medical treatment**.



Tip: If the face or eyes are burnt, **sit upright as much as possible** as it will help to reduce swelling.

Head injuries

All children bump their heads every now and then. With children being incredibly active, head injuries can be pretty common in children. Most head injuries are minor and do not cause serious problems.

Symptoms of a minor head injury include:

- A mild headache
- Feeling sick
- Mild dizziness
- Mild blurred vision

If your child has fallen off something high or experienced a knock to the head, make sure they rest and hold a cold compress to their head - a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a tea towel will do the trick!



Tip: If your child is bleeding heavily, put a clean cloth on the wound and directly apply pressure for several minutes.

Parents should try to remember how the head injury occurred so that they can explain fully to a medical professional. If your child loses consciousness or if the symptoms get worse, call 999.

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